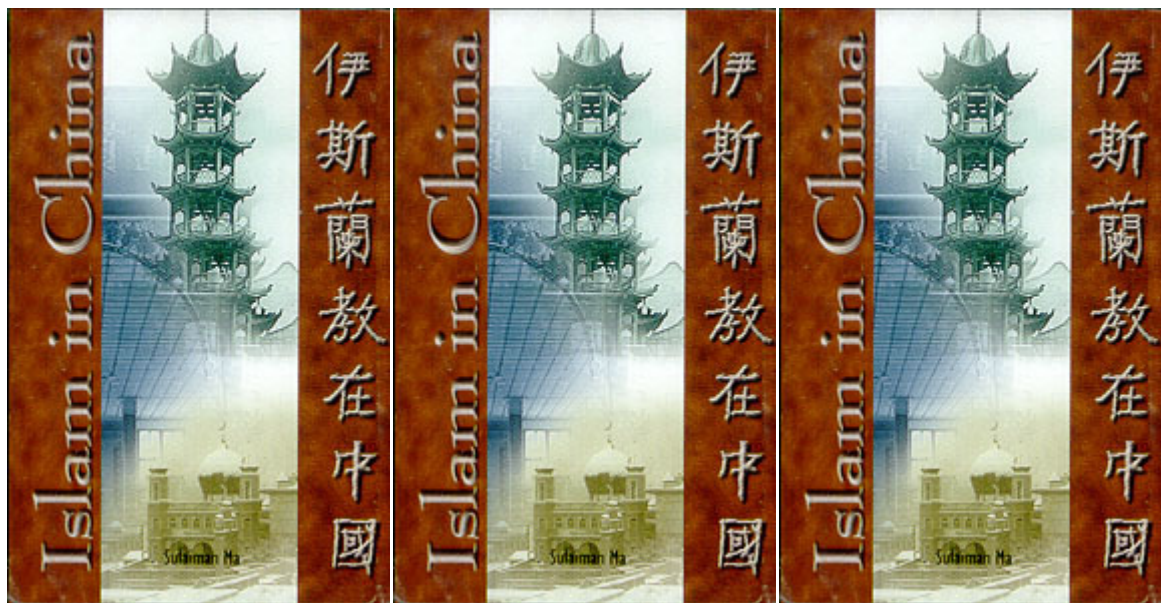
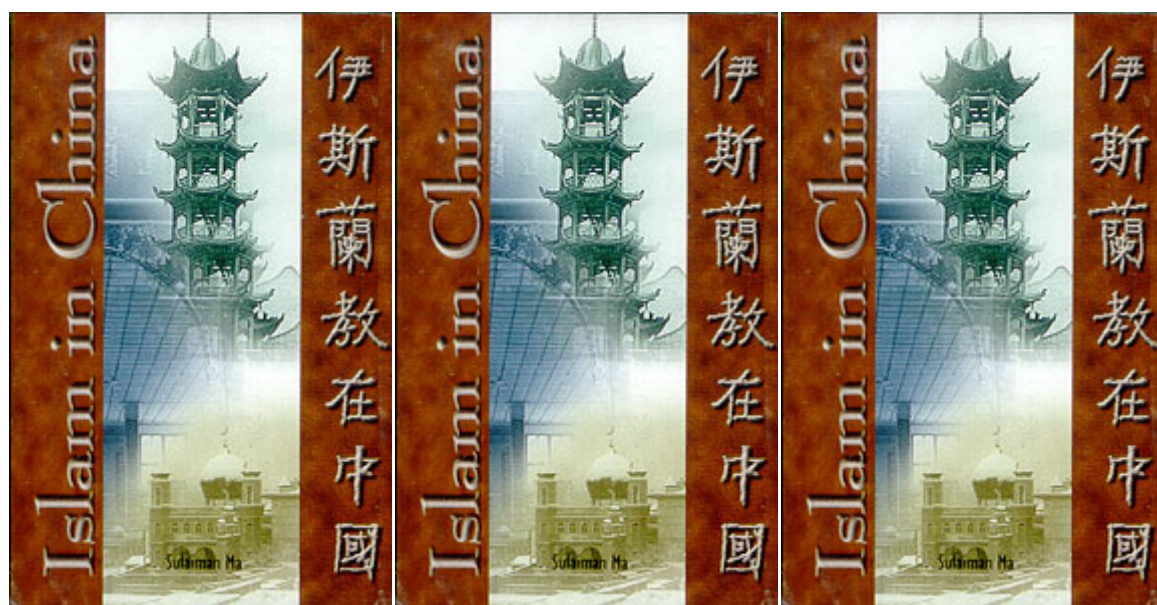




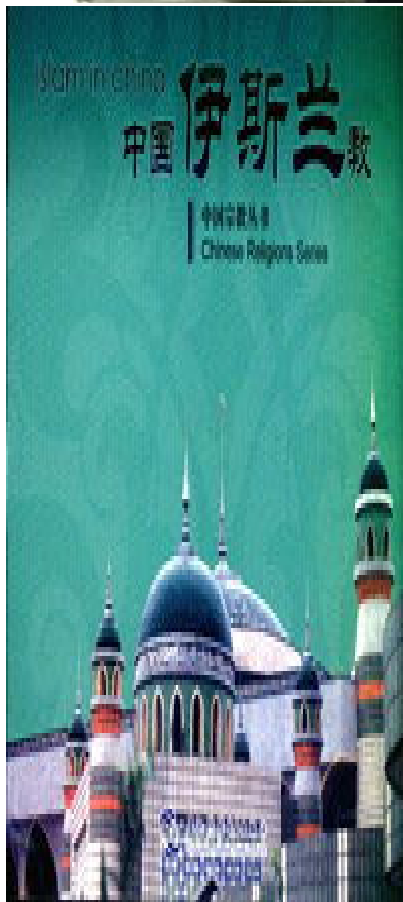
ISLAM IN CHINA











MUSLIMS TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN CITING A HADITH THAT

Islam in China

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EVEN BEFORE THIS, THE ARAB TRADERS DURING THE TIME OF THE PROPHET (PBUH), HAD ALREADY BROUGHT ISLAM TO CHINA, ALTHOUGH THIS WAS NOT AN ORGANIZED EFFORT, BUT MERELY AS AN OFFSHOOT OF THEIR JOURNEY ALONG THE SILK ROUTE (LAND AND SEA ROUTE).







Even though there are only sparse records of the event in Arab history, a brief one in Chinese history, The Ancient Record of the Tang Dynasty describes the landmark visit. To Chinese Muslims, this event is considered to be the birth of Islam in China. To show his admiration for Islam, the emperor Yung Wei ordered the establishment of China's first mosque. The magnificent Canton city mosque known to this day as the 'Memorial Mosque.' still stands today, after fourteen centuries.





One of the first Muslim settlements in China was established in this port city. The Umayyads and Abbasids sent six delegations to China, all of which were warmly received by the Chinese.

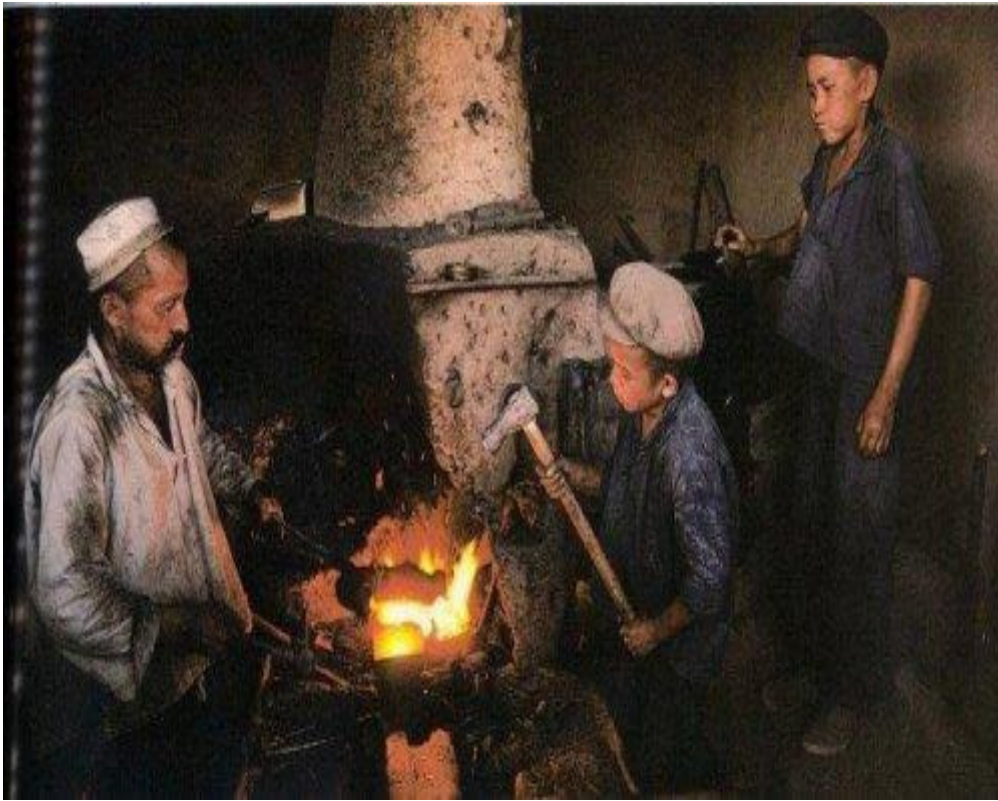




The Muslims who immigrated to China eventually began to have a great economic impact and influence on the country. They virtually dominated the import/export business by the time of the Sung Dynasty (960 - 1279 CE). Indeed, the office of Director General of Shipping was consistently held by a Muslim during this period. Under the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644 CE) generally considered to be the golden age of Islam in China, Muslims gradually became fully integrated into Han society.



an interesting example of this synthesis by chinese muslims was the process by which their names changed. many muslims who married han women simply took on the name of the wife. others took the chinese surnames of mo, mai, and mu - names adopted by muslims who had the names muhammad, mustafa, and masoud. still others who could find no chinese surname similar to their own adopted the chinese character that most closely resembled their name - ha for hasan, hu for hussein, or sai for said, and so on.



In addition to names, Muslim customs of dress and food also underwent a synthesis with Chinese culture. The Islamic mode of dress and dietary restrictions were consistently maintained, however, and not compromised. In time, the Muslims began to speak Han dialects and to read in Chinese. Well into

the Ming era, the Muslims could not be distinguished from other Chinese other than by their unique religious customs. In spite of the economic successes the Muslims enjoyed during these and earlier times, they were recognized as being fair, law-abiding, and self-disciplined. For this reason, once again, there was little friction between Muslim and non-Muslim Chinese.



Over the years, many Muslims established mosques, schools and madrasas attended by students from as far as Russia and India. It is reported that in the 1790's, there was as many as 30,000 Islamic students, and the city of Bukhara, - the birthplace of Imam Bukhari, one of the foremost compilers of hadith - which was then part of China, came to be known as the "Pillar of Islam."





The rise of the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644 - 1911 CE), though, changed this. The Ch'ing were Manchu (not Han) and were a minority in China. They employed tactics of divide-and-conquer to keep the Muslims, Han, Tibetans, and Mongolians in struggles against one another. In particular, they were responsible for inciting anti-Muslim sentiment throughout China, and used Han soldiers to suppress the Muslim regions of the country. When the Manchu Dynasty fell in 1911, the Republic of China was established by Sun Yat Sen, who immediately proclaimed that the country belonged equally to the Han, Hui (Muslim), Man (Manchu), Meng (Mongol), and the Tsang (Tibetan) peoples. His policies led to some improvement in relations among these groups.





Since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, tremendous upheavals occurred throughout China culminating in the Cultural

Revolution. Muslims along with all the Chinese population suffered. After the third congress of the 11th Central committee, the government greatly liberalized its policies toward Islam and Muslims.. Since religious freedom was declared in 1978, the Chinese Muslims have not wasted time in expressing their convictions.





The Great Mosque, Xi'an

Under China's current leadership, in fact, Islam appears to be undergoing a modest revival. Religious leaders report more worshipers now than before the Cultural Revolution, and a reawakening of interest in religion among the young.





According to a publication on mosques in China(1998 edition), there are now 32,749 mosques in the entire People's Republic of China, with 23,000 in the province of Xinjiang. There has been an increased upsurge in Islamic expression in China, and many nationwide Islamic associations have been organized to coordinate inter-ethnic activities among Muslims. Islamic literature can be found quite easily and there are currently some eight different translations of the Qur'an in the Chinese language as well as translations in Uygur and the other Turkic languages.

Muslims have also gained a measure of toleration from other religious practices. In areas where Muslims are a majority, the breeding of pigs by non-Muslims is forbidden in deference to Islamic beliefs. Muslim communities are allowed separate cemeteries; Muslim couples may have their marriage consecrated by an imam; and Muslim workers are permitted holidays during major religious festivals. The Muslims of China have also been given almost unrestricted allowance to make the Hajj to Mecca. China's Muslims have also been active in the country's internal politics. As always, the Muslims have refused to be silenced. Islam is very much alive for China's Muslims who have managed to practice their faith, sometimes against great odds, since the seventh century.

